



Children and Family Services  
Training Center  
Department of Social Work  
University of North Dakota

# Fostering Communications



Winter 2005

*Building a Network of People in the Foster Care System*

Vol. XIX No. 1

## Mike and Jan Thompson

*Top North Dakota Foster Parents for 2004*

*By Del Hager*

My first clue that an interview with Mike and Jan Thompson was not going to be about them, but rather, about the 100+ children they have provided for in foster care, should have been when their incredibly busy schedules made it nearly impossible to get together. Or, the clue might have been when they chose to make a special trip to Grand Forks on a Saturday to do the interview; but, they really came to town so their foster child could visit his family. Or, maybe I should have caught on when Jan dropped a huge photo album on my desk and for the next hour and a half the three of us proceeded to look at pictures of every foster child who has ever passed through their doorway.

This story is supposed to be about the award received by Mike and Jan of McVile at the 2004 North Dakota Foster Parent Association Conference, but they made sure that the interview was all about the kids. That's just the way they are – they believe that the real story and awards belong to the kids.

The Thompson's have had children placed with them multiple times but the total number children they have had in their home now stands at one hundred twenty. A picture of every one of the children is in their photo album! The pictures used to be displayed on a bulletin board and on the fridge, but that changed when a boy decided to run away and take his picture with him. He seemed to think that the only reason Mike and Jan had his photo was to turn it over to the police as a means of identifying him. Naturally, the boy was eventually found. Jan asked the social worker for another picture and they promptly snapped the shot that is currently mounted safely in the photo album.

They began foster care in 1993 when Jan persisted in asking Mike if she could respond to a newspaper add that said the region was looking for a family to commit to a 12 year old Native American boy. Their youngest son had just left home to join the Air Force so it was just the two of them and their dog, Lucy, at home. Mike works for the railroad and Jan was holding down two part-time jobs. This seemed to be enough for Mike as he humorously questioned Jan, "Are you on drugs?" After about a week he gave in and Jan quickly called the local County Social

Services office. When her phone message was not returned promptly, she called Lynn Wright, the Regional Foster Care Supervisor at Northeast Human Services at the time, who put her in touch with Rhoda Klava, a PATH social worker, who handled the licensing process.

They completed about 60 hours of training and had fostered several tough kids when they began to question if they really wanted to stay in the foster care program. A foster child initiated a series of troubling events that spilled over into the lives of their children and grandchildren. It created what is best described as a

"nightmare." Rather than simply give up, they went into counseling and "worked out a lot of issues," Jan stated. They decided to continue fostering but chose to work with the Shelter Care Program. Currently, they maintain two Shelter Care beds and two beds for children needing longer placement.

"Through all the ups and downs," we asked Mike and Jan, "What keeps you in the program?" Without hesitation, Jan said, "One thing is, Kate (Kenna) is a very, very good friend of ours - a personal friend. I love her to death." Kate Kenna is the Assistant Regional Director at NEHSC and formerly a

Regional Supervisor. She nominated Mike and Jan as Foster Parents of the Year and provided information to the ND Foster Parent Association. Jan explained that Kate has helped to ease the burden on them the past few years by not letting them get overloaded with too difficult or too many placements. Mike said, "A few years ago we were on a first name basis with all the deputies in the county." They would call at 3-4AM and say, "put on the coffee, I'm coming over." The pressure of having challenging delinquent children needed to be lessened and Kate helps in the screening process prior to placement.

There is no doubt about the mutual love and appreciation between Kate and the Thompson's. Kate wrote, "Jan once told me that she had found the secret to making a child feel welcome in their home. Keep a batch of chocolate cookie dough in the fridge, and start baking when you get the call that a child is coming. (It has kept me going back.) Each child who goes to the Thompson's is greeted with a welcoming smile, clear rules, and chocolate chip cookies." Kate adds, "she often brings treats to Perm Plans. We

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# From the State Office

By Don Snyder,  
Foster Care Administrator

## North Dakota's CFSR Results

### Areas Most Improved:

Data compiled from the Federal Review of 2001 and the two Department-conducted reviews (2003 and 2004), indicate improvement with the federal safety standards regarding Risk of Harm to Children, Needs and Services of the Child, Parents, and Foster Parents, Worker Visits with Child, and Mental Health of the Child. All these factors did not meet the standard at the time of the Federal review in 2001.

### Areas Needing Improvement:

Four primary factors continue to pose difficulties in meeting the needs of children and families.

Conformance with the federal standard for Repeat Maltreatment (refers to additional reports of suspected abuse or neglect related to a specific perpetrator) fell from 89.3% in 2001 to 85.4% in 2004. This indicates that there was an increase in repeat maltreatment reports during that time period. This trend appears to be turning around in a positive direction. 2005 reviews completed in 3 regions through mid-February, showed that together those regions were in 93% conformance with this federal child safety standard.

The other three factors impact on one another. Two factors show improvement, but continue to be of concern related to the quality of the service being provided. National research indicates that the re-entry of children into the foster care system is often related to the quantity and quality of worker visits with the child and parents and their meaningful involvement in their own case planning.

Foster Care Re-Entries (a permanency factor) conformance changed from 84.7% to 81.8% from 2001 to 2004. This denotes increased entries of children back into foster care. Reviews completed in 3 regions through mid-February 2005, showed that together those regions were 86% in conformance with the federal standard.

Worker Visits with the Child improved overall up to 89% conformance in 2004. However, subsequent reviews indicate that worker visits with the child may not focus on the pertinent issues of the case plan, the services recommended, or the attainment of goals set for the child and family. Through February 15, 2005, the department had completed three of the eight regional reviews scheduled for 2005. Those reviews indicated a 95% conformance rate through mid-February.

Worker Visits with Parents improved from 82% in 2001 to 86.2% in 2004. Reviews have been completed in three regions through mid-February 2005 and they show a 92% conformance rate.

### Ongoing Performance Review Process:

Reviews for all eight Human Service Center Regions and County Social Services have been scheduled for 2005. Continuing the process implemented in 2004, children and families affected by child welfare services, and county and state representatives including state legislators and county commissioners will be invited to participate in the stakeholder groups that provide information about the strengths and challenges specific to each region. In addition, administrative staff members of the N.D. Supreme Court have been invited to participate in regional reviews. This is intended to better integrate the work of the court system's Court Improvement Project with the child welfare system's Children and Family Services Review.



## Next Federal Review:

North Dakota is scheduled for its next Federal Review in 2007. Child welfare professionals anticipate that the review process will be an on-going and integral method of determining best practices in child welfare far into the future.

# President's Corner

By Jim Schnabel

The NDFPA is here for you the foster parents. In the past few months I have heard from foster parents across our great state of ND. Some are excited or looking forward to becoming foster parents; others are tired and bruised and beaten. In both cases the NDFPA wants to help. We are a network of foster parents who can come along side of you and be a source of hope and encouragement.

As foster parents we sometimes get so caught up in the problems of those around us that we fail to see our own troubles until it's too late. That is why the NDFPA is encouraging every region in the state to organize and meet regularly; first, to share information and learn from each other's experience and, secondly, to encourage and build each other up. No one should ever feel that they are alone, foster care is to be a team effort.

The NDFPA board will be meeting in mid-February and discussing many different topics. If any of you as foster parents have any suggestions for us on how we can help you or your region, please let the other board members know.

On April 23rd the NDFPA will partner with the UND Children and Family Services Training Center to provide an opportunity for additional training through a grant from the North Dakota Department of Human Services, Children and Family Services Division. Jan Kjelland, a National Foster Parent Association trainer from Valley City, will present "Foster Parent Educational Advocacy" training at UND in Grand Forks. Please see the conference flier enclosed in this newsletter for specific details. We look forward to seeing you there.

We live in a world filled with tragedy. Remember to reach out to a child in need and be one of the tools to ease and end their personal tragedy. May it be your goal that no child should go to bed hungry, abused, or neglected.



# UND CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES WEBSITE

The Children and Family Services Training Center's newly launched website has helpful information and resources for foster parents. A calendar of statewide training events for foster/adoptive parents is included on the site. (If you know of a training event in your area that you would like included on our website, please let us know.)

The Training Center also has a resource library which includes books, videos and educational curricula that can be helpful in understanding foster care and adoption issues, as well as materials that may be helpful in understanding your child's specific needs. The resources can be easily checked out of the library.

The Fostering Communications newsletter can also be read on-line at our site. Please visit us at [www.cfstc.und.edu](http://www.cfstc.und.edu) and let us know what you think.

# Foster Care Focus

## Getting to School and Paying for it!

*By Robin Nixon, National Foster Care Coalition*

### Paying for College or Vocational School

It is an economic fact of life these days that every college credit is worth its weight in gold in terms of economic opportunity and income. Sometimes it seems that college credits must be made of gold, too, considering how much they cost!! For foster youth, who may not have any financial support from family members, the costs of college might be impossibly high. There are, fortunately LOTS of resources out there, some of which are just for students who have been in care.

Again, here are three things that will help to ensure that students are able to pay for higher education and training opportunities:

- \* **Start Early:** A lot of scholarship applications are due in the fall of the senior year. Federal financial aid should be applied for as early as January of the year that the student will be attending (apply in January to start school in the summer or in the fall). Deadlines are generally inflexible and some scholarship funds are disbursed on a “first come, first served” basis.
- \* **Do Lots of Research:** There are not only federal programs to provide scholarship money specifically for foster youth, but also state programs, which might be scholarships or even tuition waivers – free attendance at state universities and colleges. There are a multitude of private scholarships, some based on need, and some on merit or other area of ability.
- \* **Make sure that students understand the connection between academic progress and their scholarships:** Most scholarship programs, as well as financial aid, are contingent on satisfactory progress in school. The job doesn't end once the money is received! Students need lots of support while they are in college, as well as some accountability to an adult that they trust and who they know will help them stay motivated.

There are a number of financial resources, scholarships, and other assistance that have been directly targeted at helping foster youth pay for and stay in college. The implementation of these programs varies significantly from state to state, even though some of the funds come directly from the federal government and are part of a federal program. They may be implemented more effectively in some places than others, and it's up to youth and adults to work together in order to ensure that young people have access to these opportunities.

### Federal Financial Aid

All foster youth are eligible to receive federal financial aid. This aid comes in the form of a package that usually includes grant funds, loans and sometimes work-study funds. Students apply by filling out the Free Application for Student Financial Aid (FAFSA for short). The amount of financial aid a student qualifies for is mostly based on family income, but here's the good news: foster youth (and former foster youth who have left the system) can mark themselves down as a 1-person family (only you). This means that they

don't count their parent's income, which means foster youth usually qualify for the maximum amount of financial aid available. See the website at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov> File the FAFSA as early in the year as possible, and then contact the Financial Aid Office of the school that the student will be attending. The Financial Aid office can answer any questions, and also work with the student to determine what the costs of attendance at the school will be. Each school has some flexibility in determining costs of attendance, and may be able to include some costs especially relevant to foster youth, such as transportation and child care. Figuring out the costs of attendance is also important for determining how Chafee ETV funds are used (see below).

### The Orphan Foundation of America (OFA)

OFA has a number of scholarship programs available, as well as some wonderful support programs, such as mentoring and care packages, for young people who are in college. OFA awards hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships each year. The application deadline for the next round of OFA scholarships is March 31, 2005. Application criteria and information can be found at [http://www.orphan.org/scholarship\\_info.html](http://www.orphan.org/scholarship_info.html)

### The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV Program)

The Chafee Program was established in 1999 by the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 to provide independent living and other transition services to youth preparing for adulthood. This program was expanded in 2001 to include a program that specifically funds post-secondary education and vocational training for foster youth. Funds must be used to pay for the “cost of attendance” at an “institution of higher education”. Both of those terms are technical terms as defined by the Higher Education Act (<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/PDFs/ETV/ETVdocs/hea1965.pdf>). Information about your state's ETV program, as well as other scholarship programs, can be found at any of the websites listed below:

<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/etv.htm>

<http://www.fosterclub.org/education/index.cfm>

<https://www.statevoucher.org/>

[www.orphan.org](http://www.orphan.org)

[http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/state\\_home.htm](http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/state_home.htm)

### State Tuition Waivers and other State-sponsored Scholarship Programs

Many states have implemented tuition waivers, which allow youth who are or were in foster care (how long a youth had to be in care, or at what age, varies in each state program) to attend state institutions of higher education at no cost. Many states have done this just for foster youth, though a few (Georgia, for example) offer free tuition to any youth in the state who graduates from high school with a B average. Contact the state independent living coordinator to find out what tuition waivers or other programs are

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# Scholarship

From Vicki Hoff

The North Dakota Foster Parent Association annually awards scholarship money to youth in foster care who have a desire to further their education beyond high school. In 1984, the NDFPA announced the formation of a scholarship committee that led to the development of a scholarship trust fund the following year. In 1988, the Ruth Meiers Children's Memorial Scholarship was established to honor the former State Representative and first woman Lieutenant Governor of North Dakota.

Applications should be requested from Vicki Hoff, the chair of the scholarship committee. You may write or call Vicki at: 1011 62nd Ave NE Lot 16, Minot, ND 58701. Phone 701-838-6296. She will help you with any questions or problems you might have in completing the application form.

All types of educational opportunities beyond high school will be considered.

Applications should be submitted by around the first of July for NDFPA scholarships because the decisions on the award winners must be completed before the annual conference in October. Membership dues, memorials, contributions and donations from individuals and businesses help to fund the scholarships.

The Dr. Bernard Brommel Scholarship for Foster Youth is awarded to a currently enrolled University of North Dakota student who is a former foster youth, preferably with PATH. Children and Family Services Training Center shall be responsible for selecting a student to be the recipient of this scholarship each year. Contact Pete Tunseth, Director, CFSTC, 701-777-3442.

Former residents of any of the facilities operated by Home on the Range are eligible for a scholarship through the Fraternal Order of Eagles Memorial Foundation. Application must be made before reaching the age of 25 years. Contact HOTR, Sentinel Butte, ND, 701-872-3745.

## Authentic Voices of North Dakota

By Heather M. Pautz

"Incest victim"- I thought those words were or would always be branded on my forehead! I thought that I would never be free from the abuse because who would believe me? I thought if I kept the secret I until I was old enough to take care of myself then I could leave home and be in control of my destiny. As the years passed, I couldn't leave home without my siblings because they might be hurt if I left so the secret and the abuse continued. Ten or more long years passed before I had the courage to tell and get help.

Children are not seen or treated as Authentic Voices. The word "authentic" means genuine, real, valid, bona fide, true, reliable, and dependable. How many of us have taught our children to be seen and not heard, to see no evil, hear no evil and most of all speak no evil? Many people believe that children lie; are not reliable and not dependable. They think that what they say about being victims of child abuse and neglect can't be real, true or valid because they are children. Children struggle to be believed!

I was one of the lucky ones because I was believed right away. Without knowing it I have been an Authentic Voice in North Dakota for the last sixteen years. I have been empowered by speaking about my life to hundreds of people. Every time I speak about it my husband asks me why. At first, I figured everyone knew anyway because it was the top news story on the six o'clock news on March 11, 1988. Then, I heard other people trying to tell my story and I didn't want that to happen. During high school and college I shared my story as part of assignments for speech, woman's studies and social work classes. Eventually someone



asked me to do a presentation for a fundraising event. From that I learned that telling my story not only helped me but could help someone else too!

CiCi Porter, singer/song writer and Authentic Voice, from San Diego, California, affirmed my belief that telling our stories can be a powerful tool in healing ourselves and educating and protecting others. People were personally impacted by her music and the truth she spoke and sang about. I wanted to replicate that impact in North Dakota with North Dakota survivors, thus the beginning of Authentic Voices in North Dakota. I know there are talented men and women like CiCi in our state that can sing, dance, paint, write, speak, and act. They have authentic stories to tell of the abuse and neglect they experienced as children. The more we tell our stories and educate others the more people in our state will be able to legitimately proclaim "it doesn't happen here!" like they now believe.

Authentic Voices of North Dakota: the name and mission are powerful and will change the lives of all children in our state! Part of our mission is to educate adults about the impact of child abuse and neglect on themselves and children in their lives. Our hope is that increased education will mean prevention of future child abuse and neglect. Voice can mean: right to be heard, influence, vote, participate, and involvement. Authentic Voices of North Dakota is about all of those things and more! Survivors of any form of child abuse or neglect and every individual impacted by it, now have the opportunity to be heard, or seen, or read about. Our stories will help educate adults and protect children. We will participate in influencing the health and welfare of children in our state. We will need to engage every skill, talent and resource we can to accomplish our goal. No one can tell our stories better than all of us together. Secrecy and silence were our worst enemies and best friends. They hurt and protected us simultaneously. Join us in providing "voice" to those who cannot speak for or protect themselves.

Authentic Voices of North Dakota's goal is to find survivors and others impacted by any form of child abuse and/or neglect in every city in the state to participate in ending child abuse and neglect! To join us call Heather M. Pautz at 701-845-6659 or Sheila Andrews at 701-293-7273, email 02pauh@state.nd.us or go to the Authentic Voices Website at [www.StopChildAbuseND.com](http://www.StopChildAbuseND.com) for further information and registration forms.

Incest victim = my past                      Survivor = my present

Authentic Voice = my future.

Children are our future. Help impact the future and join Authentic Voices of North Dakota!

## Federal Adoption Tax Credit for Special Needs Adoption

In the summer of 2001, the Federal Adoption Tax Credit was updated. The most important update was to expand benefits to children with special needs adopted from the U.S. foster care system. So starting in tax year 2003, families adopting a child with special needs from foster care, had access to this same tax credit without needing to document expenses. For tax year 2004, the tax credit is \$10,390 and you have up to five years in which to use it.

The North American Council on Adoptable Children interprets the publication to say: if you receive an adoption subsidy (assistance) for your child, it means the state that provides the subsidy has determined your child has special needs. Your adoption subsidy agreement is the evidence that the state has determined your child to have special needs.

IRS publication 968, which can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p968/ar01.html#d0e511>, discusses the special rules for adopting a child with special needs.

If you have questions on the adoption tax credit, contact the North American Council on Adoptable Children at 651-644-3036 or [adoption.assistance@nacac.org](mailto:adoption.assistance@nacac.org).

like to schedule her first thing in the morning, or around the noon hour." She finds that, "Mike and Jan rarely say 'no' when they are asked about taking a placement. They usually say, 'We'll give it a go.'" Kate concludes that "Mike usually lets Jan take the lead but he makes his opinion known when necessary. They are a team."

The Thompson's find that about 90% of their work comes from Grand Forks County. Jan went on to say, "I feel like a very well respected part of that team and I think there is no better county to work with in the whole state than Grand Forks County." At the annual foster parent banquet, Jan brings a hanging quilt she has personally made, as a gift for a social worker to win in a drawing.

The Thompson's have seen about 70% of the children go home from their foster home. During the week, Jan takes care of the important business of family visits while on the weekends, Mike handles all the travel to visits. Jan said, "Mike and I work very, very hard with the family to get these kids home. I think that (working with families) pays off. We believe kids belong at home with their families." Kate Kenna added, "Jan follows up with kids and families long after they have left. She sends baby quilts when babies are born, or sympathy cards when there is a death in a family."

Whenever possible, they like to take the children on vacation trips. They've been to such places as Winnipeg, Valley Fair, the Mall of America, Omaha, Sioux Falls, Philadelphia, and the New Jersey coast. Grand Forks County once purchased an airline ticket for a young girl who was just placed with them, when it nearly interrupted their long awaited vacation plans to the East coast.

Travel to these metropolitan areas and even life in a city the size of Grand Forks, is quite a contrast to the little town of McVile, North Dakota. Just as a visit to bigger cities gives them opportunities, by living in McVile "they can be busy every single day if they want to. There's stuff they can do," Jan explained. She likes to teach them to be self-sufficient by giving them age appropriate chores to do. She feels that by the time they're ten to twelve years old, they should be able to entertain themselves and be responsible for some chores.

Mike and Jan find that there are many advantages to living in a small town and having a school system that seems to be a good fit for most of the children placed with them. When they started in the foster care program there was a need for advocacy work with the school system in order to meet the individual program needs of many of the children. Today, these issues are a normal part of the education system. Jan stated, "for the kids coming from Grand Forks to McVile, their grades are always up 1 or 2 letters. They see success in school and they start to see success at home." After one boy returned home, his family allowed him to drive to Petersberg the next year to finish his senior year. Another family moved to a neighboring small town so their children could go to the Dakota Prairie school after witnessing a successful transition and a better opportunity in the small town school system.

Jan said, "We try to do what we can do but, are we successful all the time? We sure aren't." She also explained, "I'll tell you, do we do everything right? No! We sure don't, because we're still parents. Parents never get it right. That's what keeps you going. It's always a challenge to see if you can do it better the next time. But, it's been rewarding...and there are some really good things that have happened to kids. I think we've made a difference." Kate Kenna stated, "They have been a wonderful asset to the foster care program!"

Congratulations to Mike and Jan Thompson in behalf of all the stake holders and providers of foster care in North Dakota. They are a very deserving family to receive the award as Foster Parents of the Year!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **March is National Social Work Month - 2005**

State and local social workers and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW)—proudly announce the kickoff of National Social Work Month 2005.

The theme for this year's campaign, "Social Workers – Help Starts Here" invites people to start with social workers when seeking help. It reinforces the point that social workers can connect people to a variety of resources in their community. This year, the Social Work Celebration in March is also the beginning of a multi-year national social work public education campaign to educate people about the breadth and depth of the profession.

Gary Bailey, MSW, president of NASW said, "March is a time to celebrate the contributions social workers make in North Dakota and the rest of the country. Social workers stand up for others—everyone deserves the same basic rights, protections and opportunities. Social workers are there to make sure that happens."

### **April is Child Abuse Prevention Month**

The theme for Child Abuse Prevention Month 2005 is "What Do You Want Your Child to Remember?" Call or email Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota (PCAND) to request an April packet for community or neighborhood planning ideas. 1-800-403-9932 or [pcand@btinet.net](mailto:pcand@btinet.net).

### **May is National Foster Care Month**

Social service agencies from around the state and the country will be planning this year's events in much the same way as in the past. There was tremendous participation in the Blue Ribbon Campaign of 2004 and we expect a similar type of event to occur this year. Teams of social workers, foster parents and foster care advocates will join forces to honor those who protect, nurture and support our most vulnerable children. Watch for local details.

### **35th Annual National Foster Parent Association Education Conference**

The Hyatt Regency Orange County in Garden Grove, California, will be the host site for this year's conference May 9-14, 2005. The theme is "Back to the Future." For more information please contact the NFPA on the web at [www.NFPAinc.org](http://www.NFPAinc.org), phone 800-557-5238, or email [events@NFPAinc.org](mailto:events@NFPAinc.org).

### **16th Annual Foster Teen Conference at UND**

Children and Family Services Training Center will once again host this exciting event June 13-17, 2005. Informational letters and application forms will be mailed to child welfare and foster care agencies soon. Please be thinking of possible referrals of youth in care ages 16-18.

### **Children and Family Services Conference**

On July 25, 26, and 27, 2005 the North Dakota Department of Human Services, Children and Family Services Division, will be sponsoring the "Children and Family Services Conference". This conference will cover safety, permanency, and well-being. Safety relates to child protective services and safety issues; permanency relates to foster care/adoption and developing permanency for children; and, well-being relates to assessment of needs including health, education, and mental health services. Many great local and national presenters will be available for breakout sessions, keynote presentations, as well as national resource centers from across the nation. Formal brochures and registration forms will be mailed on May 6, 2005.

### **International Foster Care Organization Conference**

Madison, Wisconsin, will host the 14th biennial IFCO Conference August 7-13, 2005, at the Monona Terrace Convention Center. The theme is "To Honor the Child" (From Birth Through Independence). For more information, email to [ifco2005@fostering.us](mailto:ifco2005@fostering.us) or check the web site at [www.fostering.us/ifco2005](http://www.fostering.us/ifco2005).

## Foster Care Focus

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available. A few states (Oregon, Washington, and Rhode Island are three examples) have established state-sponsored scholarship programs rather than tuition waivers.

<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/tuitionwaivermap.htm>

One more important note: Even if a young person has not finished high school or completed a GED, they still may be eligible to attend an institution of higher education, as well as receive scholarships and financial aid. For this to happen, a college or vocational school has to make a determination that the student will be "able to benefit" from the program offered (another of those technical terms). Each student must be evaluated individually and should work directly with the school or program he or she wishes to attend. In some cases, particularly at community colleges, the young person may be able to enroll and attend college courses while at the same time completing a GED course and taking the exam. For information on this kind of program, contact the admissions office at a local community college.

(This article was reprinted with permission from the National Advocate, Winter 2005. The National Advocate is the official publication of the National Foster Parent Association, Inc.)

## Upcoming Events

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### Voice for Adoption

The Voice for ADOPTION speaks out to insure permanent, nurturing families for our nation's most vulnerable children and to strengthen support for families who adopt. Voice for ADOPTION is a national coalition that has been established to actively encourage and advocate for national policies that address barriers to the adoption of waiting children and increase the understanding among the public, the media, and decision-makers of the needs of these children and the families who adopt. For more information, contact: Voice for Adoption, PO Box 77496, Washington, D.C. 20013. VFAMail@aol.com.

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**Membership:** **Helen Berger**, Bismarck

**Scholarship:** **Vicki Hoff**, Minot

**Mission Statement:** **Vernon Kersey**, Bismarck; **Carrol Burchinal**, Bismarck; **Janine Thull**, Mandan

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